

Appl. No. : 10/542,680
Filed : July 19, 2005

REMARKS

Claims 12-21 stand rejected. Claims 1-11 have been previously canceled. Claims 12-21 have been amended. New Claim 22 has been added. Support for the amendments can be found throughout the specification, particularly in paragraph [0049] and Figures 2-18 and 23-24 of the published application. Thus, Claims 12-22 are presented for consideration and further examination in view of the following amendments and remarks.

Rejection of Claims 12-21 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b) and 103(a)

The Examiner rejected Claims 12-14, 16, and 18-21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,176,908 (Wagner). The Examiner rejected dependent Claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wagner in view of the knowledge of one skilled in the art. The Examiner also rejected dependent Claim 17 as being obvious under Wagner in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,666,448 (Schoenwald et al.). With respect to the anticipation rejection of independent Claims 12 and 21, Applicant respectfully submits that a claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described in a single prior art reference. *See* M.P.E.P. § 2131.

Wagner discloses an access port for use in optical switching, monitoring, attenuating, or distribution devices. (Abstract). The access port in Wagner comprises two optical fibers with wedge-shaped end portions. To facilitate processing, handling, and alignment of the fibers, the wedge-shaped end portions may be encapsulated in plastic bodies (Figure 2, parts 35, 36) provided with planar guide surfaces (Figure 2, parts 38, 39, 41, and 42, identified as corresponding to the interlocking means of the pre-amendment claims). (Col. 4, ll. 33-53.) The guide surfaces 38, 39, 41, and 42 are configured to aid in handling and processing of the bodies 35, 36 and do not contact the corresponding guide surfaces of the other plastic body. (See Figure 2). When the bodies 35, 36 are aligned, they are joined together at contact surfaces using a bonding agent. (Col. 4, ln. 66 – Col. 5, ln. 3). When the bodies 35, 36 are bonded, the contact surfaces are merely in abutting relationship to one another.

Claim 12 has been amended to recite an optical connector comprising, *inter alia*, “a push-fit portion for attaching and aligning said first optical connector to a second optical connector which is appropriately matingly configured.” The claimed configuration advantageously allows

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networks to be upgraded with minimal or no disruption of network traffic. It also simplifies network planning by allowing later upgrades, for example with optical add-drop multiplexers and filters, again with minimal impact on existing traffic. Such a configuration also reduces the number of components required to achieve reliable communication across connectors. Applicant respectfully submits that Wagner fails to disclose at least this above-mentioned structure as recited in Claim 12.

Further, Applicant notes that Schoenwald discloses a variable splitting optical coupler comprising three ports and a movable deflecting element assembly (part 18, Figure 1). The Examiner refers to the deflecting element assembly 18 as providing a “snap-action closure.” Applicant submits that the deflecting surfaces 34, 35 in Schoenwald are part of the deflecting element assembly 18 of Schoenwald. In contrast, independent Claim 12 has been amended to clarify that the claimed reflection surface is disposed independent of the push-fit portion. Specifically, amended Claim 12 recites “a total internal reflection surface upon at least a portion of which, in use, said radiations impinge... said portion of said total internal reflection surface being disposed independent of said push-fit portion.” Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that the applied art of record does not disclose each and every element of Claim 12. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of independent Claim 12 has been overcome.

Claim 21 has also been amended to recite, *inter alia*, “a push-fit portion for attaching and aligning said first optical connector to another optical connector which is appropriately matingly configured... wherein the push-fit portion of said first connector is operatively positioned so that with said first connector fully pushed against said other connector as aforesaid, the total internal reflection surface of said first connector will be in sufficient proximity to the total internal reflection frustrating means of said other connector as to allow the optical radiations to pass across the connection then formed by the two attached connectors.” Claim 21 has further been amended to recite “a total internal reflection surface upon at least a portion of which, in use, said radiations impinge... said portion of said total internal reflection surface being disposed independent of said push-fit portion.” For the reasons discussed above, Applicant respectfully submits that the applied art of record fails to disclose at least these structures as recited in Claim 21. Accordingly, because the applied art of record does not disclose each and every element of

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Claim 21, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of independent Claim 21 has been overcome.

Claims 13-20 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 1 and, thus, are patentable for at least the same reasons that the claim from which they depend is patentable over the applied art. Therefore, allowance of Claims 12-21 is respectfully requested.

New Claim 22

Applicant has added new Claim 22, which depends from independent Claim 1. New Claim 22 recites that the push-fit portion comprises at least one alignment pin. This feature is disclosed, for example, in Paragraph [0049] of the published specification. The references of record do not disclose an optical connector having this combination of features, and thus Applicant respectfully submits that new Claim 22 is allowable over these references.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections set forth in the outstanding Office Action are inapplicable to the present claims. Accordingly, early issuance of a Notice of Allowance is most earnestly solicited.

Any remarks in support of patentability of one claim should not be imputed to any other claim, even if similar terminology is used. Any remarks referring to only a portion of a claim should not be understood to base patentability on solely that portion; rather, patentability must rest on each claim taken as a whole. Applicant has not presented arguments concerning whether the applied references can be properly combined in view of the clearly missing elements noted above, and Applicant reserves the right to later contest whether a proper motivation and suggestion exists to combine these references.

Applicant respectfully traverses each of the Examiner's rejections and each of the Examiner's assertions regarding what the prior art discloses or teaches, even if not expressly discussed herein. Although changes to the claims have been made, no acquiescence or estoppel is or should be implied thereby; such amendments are made only to expedite prosecution of the present application and are without prejudice to the presentation or assertion, in the future, of claims relating to the same or similar subject matter.

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The undersigned has made a good faith effort to respond to all of the noted rejections and to place the claims in condition for immediate allowance. Nevertheless, if any undeveloped issues remain or if an issue requires clarification, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call Applicant's attorney in order to resolve any such issue promptly.

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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